
REFLECTIONS,
ON THE
HISTORY of OPPOSITION.

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REFLECTIONS

ON

A PAMPHLET,

ENTITLED,

A Short History of Opposition;

With some Observations on the Views
of the Minority;

AND

Reflections on the present State of Affairs.

BY

A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.

Charles D. Webb

*Virtus repulsæ nescia sordida,
Intaminatis fulgit Honoribus.*

HOR.

*Inscribed by F. Webb
Sunderland 1800*

PRINTED, M,DCC,LXXIX.

REFLECTIONS

1845

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Charles

London: Printed by J. Johnson, in Pall-mall.

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REFLECTIONS

ON

A late PAMPHLET, &c.

Sit spes fallendi, miscebit sacra profanis.

Sep. 1779.

HAVING lately perused a Pamphlet, entitled, "*The Conduct of Opposition, during the last Session of Parliament,*" I met with a Number of bare-fac'd Assertions, so false in Fact, and conveyed in a Manner so uncandid and disingenuous, that, little qualified as I am for the Undertaking, I could not forbear attempting to vindicate some of the Characters therein aspersed; to detect the most glaring Fallacies contained in it; and to guard the People in general, so far as I was able, against the palpable Designs of the Author.

I must acquaint the Reader that this is not intended as a full Answer to this Pamphlet, but only to a few of the most exceptionable Parts of it.

IN Page the 10th, he informs us, "That Mismanagement, and a consequential Want of Success, had convinced the Nation, that there was an Error in planning, or a Defect in executing the War." I believe more were of Opinion, that the Want of Success arose, from the Difficulty of carrying on War in a Country of such natural Strength, or from the Impracticability of the War itself, rather than from any Error in the Plan or Defect in the Execution. The Misfortune at Saratoga, and the unsuccessful Event of General PREVOST's Expedition to South Carolina, seem to justify these Opinions.

PAGE the 12th, he insinuates that Sir WILLIAM HOW wanted Talents to improve on Victories. The fatal Consequences which have followed any Attack of the Enemy far from the Sea, rather prove
his

his Judgment in not dividing his Forces;
or engaging too far within the Land.

A Charge is brought, Page the 11th, against General BURGOYNE for leaving his Troops, and returning Home to demand an Enquiry into his Conduct, by which his Guilt or Innocence might be made fully manifest. His Resolution and Self-devotement, (as it may, without great Impropriety, be stiled) is represented by this *impartial* Writer, as an "absolute Want of Prudence." He compares his Conduct to that of TERENTIUS VARRO, after the Battle of Cannæ:—that of the DECII, strikes me as a much apter Comparison. That there was some *trifling* Difference in the Objects, for which the Roman and English Generals devoted themselves, must be acknowledged. The DECII, for the Roman People, in the *most virtuous State* of that Republic; the English General, for *the British Ministry of the Year 1777*.—I shall be told, that the DECII died; my Answer is, true, they did; and BURGOYNE is still living: and may he remain so, untill his Country stands no longer in that

Need of him she does at present; and long after the political Dissolution of his ministerial Friends.

THIS Gentleman was the Man pitched upon by Ministry, in preference to all others, to carry on the War from the Side of Canada. He engaged in it with less Reluctance, and probably with a fuller Conviction of the Justice and Propriety of it, than many other Commanders. We waited with *Impatience*, and *America* dreaded the *Event* of this Expedition. To say, that in the Situation to which the British Troops were reduc'd, every Thing was done by Men that Men could do, is only paying to him and his Army, that fair and equal Tribute of Applause, which their Conduct so highly merited.

THE Treatment he met with from Ministry after his Return; their refusing him a Trial, their depriving him of all Access to his Sovereign, at the same Time that it manifested but small Tokens of their own Innocence, afforded perhaps as strong an Instance of Ingratitude, as has happened

pened, during the Course of this War.

THUS deserted and crushed by his former Friends, what Choice had he left, but that of throwing himself into the Arms of the Minority? who though differing with him in Sentiment, yet embraced the Cause of a brave, though unfortunate Man, with that Ardor which he so justly deserved; though he had not the good Fortune to meet with it from his *professing ministerial* Friends.

PAGE the 27th, he turns their Designs to relieve Ireland, into a View of throwing every Thing into "*that desirable State*" of Confusion, which suited the Views of "the Party. To make no Remark on the *candid* Turn here given to the Intentions of the Minority, I shall only beg Leave to observe, that these Insinuations might be answered with the greatest Facility, was not the Subject, in the *present State** of that Island, rather too delicate for public Discussion: on which Account, I shall only make this single Remark, viz.

* Sep. 21, 1779.

That

That the American War, and its Consequence, the Rupture with France, by depriving Ireland of her cheif Markets for Exports, have undoubtedly been the principal Causes of her present Calamities.

HE says, Page the 32nd, "Rebellion
 " first arose in America from ambitious Fac-
 " tions, and not from the Body of the Peo-
 " ple. That the Reduction of that Faction,
 " had uniformly been the Object of Ministry
 " and not Conquest and unconditional Sub-
 " mission." To show with what Truth these
 Positions are advanced, it is only necessary
 to remind the Public, of the Proposals
 brought over by Mr. PEN; of the Sup-
 plication *then* made to the Throne, by
 the *greater Part* of the Colonies; which,
 if I mistake not were *rejected unheard*:
 and of the repeated Declarations in Par-
 liament, that America was at their Feet,
 and that nothing but unconditional Submis-
 sion should be accepted of.—How ve-
 ry short are the Memories of ministerial
 Writers!

PAGE the 51st, he says, "After the
 " Delivery of the Spanish Rescript, that
 " when

“ when a Spirit of Unanimity and Exer-
 “ tion became the Duty of every Indivi-
 “ dual, the Faction announced with a Spe-
 “ cies of Triumph, that the City of Lon-
 “ don would not vote a Man or a Shil-
 “ ling, for the national Defence, in the pre-
 “ sent Emergency. He should have add-
 ed, “ till the present Ministry were remo-
 ved.” He might at the same Time have
 told us, what a worthy Member * (of one
 of the most powerful and disinterested Fa-
 milies in this Kingdom, and a steady Op-
 poser of ministerial Measures) then declar-
 ed, that he would sacrifice both his Life
 and Fortune, to oppose the perfidious
 Schemes of the House of Bourbon. But
 this would not have suited our Author’s
 Purpose, as it would have shewn that some
 of the *Faction*, as he calls them, did not
 despair of the public Welfare, but were
 still willing to exert their utmost Abilities
 for its Relief, even in that State of Dis-
 tress, to which the Conduct of Ministry
 had reduced it.

* Ld. J——. C——. H.

JUST the Reverse of what this Writer is continually inculcating.

PROBABLY also from a Motive of Tenderness to his Patrons, he might not wish to renew the Memory of that Gentleman's Speech, which closed with this Declaration, That he would also hazard both Life and Fortune, to bring to Justice the Authors of our present Calamities.

I must now return to what I had overlooked ; his Charge against Admiral KEPPEL, Page 17th, which is equally weak and false. If any farther Advantage could have been obtained over the French Fleet, which is doubtfull, it is much more probable they were lost by Sir H—— P—— failure of Obedience, to the Signals of his superior Officer, for sending down the Rest of his Squadron, when his own Ship was disabled : or, from his Neglect of shifting his Flag to some other Ship, than from any Want of Courage or Skill in the Admiral.

HAD

HAD either of these Measures been pursued, we should probably have heard neither of Court-Martials, nor Tryals at Portsmouth.

SPEAKING of the Joy the People expressed at KEPPEL's Acquittal, Page 19th, he says, " Few Men of Sense, who were " not connected with the Views, or privy " to the Designs of the Party, could perceive any just Grounds for this Species " of vulgar Ovation." What juster Grounds for public Triumph, can arise in the Course of human Events, than to see a brave Man rescued by an impartial Sentence, from the Designs of powerfull Adversaries; or what stronger Proofs of the Integrity of his Judges, or of their Conviction of his Innocence, could be given, than their passing such a Sentence, regardless of the Consequences to themselves, I must confess, falls not within the Limits of my Capacity to conceive.

THE Applause, as general as unsolicited, conferred on KEPPEL in the Capital,
C and

and re-echoed from every Part of the Kingdom, proceeded from a Sense of the Injustice he had sustained, in the Accusation: and from a Suspicion of the Views of Ministry, who by disgusting, or disobliging every Man of Abilities, who differed with them, on the Subject of the American War, afforded but too much Reason to suspect, that they wished to deprive the Kingdom of their Services, at this very critical Juncture.

PAGE the 33^d, he says, "That it appeared that our Troops were well disciplined, and uniformly made the most military Appearance. That the Enemy were an undisciplined Rabble, without Order, Arms, or Clothing." Here one might be tempted to ask a Question, How it came to pass, that these regular, well armed, and well disciplined Troops, did not instantly disperse a raw, naked, unarmed Rabble, (who, as he adds farther, behaved neither with the Spirit, Firmness, nor Intrepidity of Soldiers,) did not the repeated Attacks at Saratoga, and the English *there* finally laying down their
Arms

Arms, render such Questions unnecessary.

AGAIN, "The British Troops executed their Duty with Energy and Bravery." In this Point I most sincerely agree with him, for who ever doubted the Gallantry of the British Troops? If they failed of Success, let that Failure be attributed to its true and proper Cause: the natural impracticability of the War: *not* to the Want of Courage, or Discipline, in the *best and bravest Troops in the World.*— And he adds, "That the Americans obtained no Advantage but by *Stratagem and Surprise.*" If our Armies were as fully and totally surprized by the Americans, as I was on the Reading of this Paragraph, I will venture to say, no Surprise was ever more compleat: having till this Moment *always* looked upon Advantages gained in War by *Stratagem or Surprise*, as Proofs of superior Genius and Abilities: and should still have remained under the same Error, had it not been for the new Light thrown over this Subject, by the Discoveries of this most ingenious Writer.

PAGE the 25th, he farther asserts that,
 “ The Nation discovered their insidious De-
 “ signs, their Lust of Power, their Thirst
 “ for Places :” Page the 46th, “ That when
 “ Spain declared in favor of France and
 “ America, the Opposition *affected* a De-
 “ gree of Melancholy :” and Page the 51st,
 to sum up the whole, that “ they presum-
 “ ed to assert in Public, *that the Tyran-*
 “ *ny of France and Spain, would be more*
 “ *welcome to them, than the Continuance*
 “ *of their Rivals in Power.*”

THAT every Man of Fortune in the
 Minority, must wish to behold a French-
 man in Possession of his Estate ; and eve-
 ry real Protestant, to see the Revival of
 Popery and Persecution, are Points so rea-
 sonable and self-evident ; carry with them
 such an Air of Truth and Conviction,
 that it would be Folly to dispute them.
 Such an Answer might be given to these
 ridiculous Charges ; and indeed they de-
 serve no better, was not the Affair of too
 serious a Nature to be treated in such a
 Manner.

AND

AND *can this Writer* lay his Hand upon his Heart, and declare that these are his real Sentiments? Does he seriously think, that the Descendants of those Families, who ventured every thing dear to them, to bring about *the Revolution*; to seat this *present Royal Family on the Throne*; to crush *two unprovoked Rebel-lions*, in 1715 and 1745; will he assert, that *their Descendants* are so far transported with Resentment, as to wish that the tyrannical Power of France, should be established in this Country, in preference to those mild, just, and equitable Laws, under which they enjoy the noblest Fortunes, with full Freedom of Sentiment, both political and religious?

No: his Patrons may be desirous, that such Impressions may be made on the Royal Mind. They may wish, that against the succeeding general Election, such Opinions may be propagated and gain Ground amongst the People;—but neither he nor they, believe the Calumnies they feign.

D

THESE

THESE, or other interested Views, have made this Writer ascribe to the most infamous, a Conduct arising from the noblest, of Motives: an ardent Desire to keep this great Empire united. And on a Failure of Success in that, a steady Pursuit of such Measures, as seemed most likely to extract the greatest Good, out of that Mass of Evil, which the high and violent Measures on this side the Atlantick, combined with a Variety of Apprehensions and Passions, perhaps aided by the Views of some artfull and ambitious Men on the other, had produced.

I am tired of exposing the Delusions, and detecting the Fallacies contained in this Pamphlet: I hope some abler and better informed Pen, will more fully consider it.* But after differing in so many Points with this Author, I cannot take my Leave, without most cordially agreeing with him in one; and that is, That

* This Part of the Pamphlet was wrote, before any Answer had appeared to *The History of the Opposition.*

the Event of this War, may terminate with Glory and Success to Great Britain. Though I own, my Wishes here outrun my Expectations. The Event of War is generally uncertain:—on the Contrary, without something of more than common Success, the Event of this may be too easily foreseen. Should it even prove fortunate, the immense additional Debt with which this Country must be loaded, will remain a dreadful Evil.

AND though we have repeatedly heard of Addresses from Irish Papists and Scotch Boroughs; though of the Counties of England few have been assembled, and of those few, some have disapproved of Subscriptions; yet I will venture to foretell, that in case of an Invasion, or any other threatening Event to these Kingdoms, the Minority, and the Friends of the Minority, will exert themselves as effectually in Defence of their King and Country, and with the same Zeal, as their Ancestors have ever done.

THEY

THEY have constantly been the steady Opposers of arbitrary Power, and *they* will be sure to feel the first and most violent Effects of such a Power should it ever *unhappily* gain the *Ascendant*.

ALL that Common Sense, Self Preservation, or Wisdom, can dictate; all that is left of great or good in the Human Breast, must and will operate on the Mind of every Friend to England, to combat and render abortive, the vile and treacherous Schemes of the House of Bourbon: who, whatever they may pretend, under colourings, however specious they may disguise their Designs, in this War have but two Aims:—first, the Ruin of Liberty, and the protestant Religion in these Kingdoms: and afterwards in America.

FOR whatever those deluded People, the Americans, may imagine, blinded and heated as they are at present by their Regretments, French Tyranny will no more suffer, the Enjoyment of Liberty and Religion *there*, after the Extirpation of them
in

in Britain, than of Liberty and Religion *here*. Their Object is, and ever has been, one and the same, uniform and invariable: the Destruction of Freedom both civil and religious, and Universal Tyranny over the Minds and Properties of Mankind.

THUS far I have endeavored to answer some of the Aspersions thrown out against, and to vindicate the Characters of, a set of Men whose Views in general, I am convinced, have been directed towards the public Good. And I must own, I feel a Pleasure in doing it at this Time, when it is so *unfashionable* a thing to speak well of them: and when their Advocates can expect to reap little other Reward for their Trouble, than the Pleasure of being such: when almost every Pen is employed, and every Art which prostituted Abilities can invent, is made use of to blacken their Characters and Designs.

BUT I could wish that these Writers, as well as their Patrons, (the Pensioners, as well as the Pensioned) should be made

E

sensible

sensible, that there are still left in this Country, in *private* as well as public Life, Men, who are capable of detecting their false and malicious Insinuations. Who, equally superior to the Smiles or Frowns of Power, and satisfied with their paternal Fortunes, form no other Wish, than to transmit them unimpaired to Posterity. Who will ever watch with a jealous Eye, over the real Welfare of their Country: and to the best of their Abilities exert themselves, not as *Republicans to overthrow*, not as *pensioned Slaves, blindly to destroy*; but as Men of *Common Sense, and Common Honesty*, to preserve so glorious a Constitution.

WHILST I am attempting to clear a few worthy Characters, from the Aspersions thrown out against them, and to place a few Subjects in their proper Lights, one Reflection unavoidably strikes me, and that is, on how flimsy, though specious, a *Performance*, my Time has been *employed*; when the Welfare, nay the very Existence of Great Britain is at Stake. Whilst a War is carrying on, which if
pro-

protracted to any Length, cannot fail of ending in her Destruction.

THE Loss of the American Trade, includes but a small Part of the Evils we feel or expect; whilst our Frigates are decaying, and our veteran Troops mouldering away, in *a fruitless and unprogressive* War against the Colonies. A War which only tends to bring Poverty and Distress on Britains, of every Rank and Denomination in all Parts of the Globe. Whilst our numerous Land Forces and immense Fleets are employed, either at Home, in keeping off an Invasion from our own Shores; or overpower'd by Numbers, are displaying unavailing and fruitless Proofs of undaunted Courage* in the West Indies: where, notwithstanding every Exertion of Skill and Valour, our Sugar Islands are successively falling a Prey to our Enemies; their Growths consigned to France, to increase the Wealth of that ambitious Nation: whilst the British Banker

* BARRINGTON at St, Lucia, and many other naval Commanders, Summer 1779.

and

and Merchant, who have advanced immense Sums on the fairest Prospect of a Return, *are disappointed in their just and reasonable Expectations, and ruin'd in their Fortunes*: whilst the Newfoundland Traders, after suffering considerably by Privateers in the Course of the Summer, at last find themselves deprived of their Markets; nay their very Entrance into the Mediterranean shut up by a *Spanish Squadron,* riding triumphant in the Streights of Gibraltar.*

WHILST at Home, the Farmer at best can procure but a low, indeed hardly any, Price for his Commodities; partly arising from the Scarcity of Vessels to *export his Grain, but chiefly* from the small Quantity of Money in circulation, (owing to the high Interest given by Government, the Inaction of Speculators, who if they purchase, know not to whom nor at what Price they shall sell again; the Quantity of Cash locked up by People, justly apprehensive of the Consequences and Event

* Oct. 1779.

of

of this fatal War; and the great Sums remitted to America :) whilst the Farmer, for these Reasons, is able to procure but a small Return for his Commodities, on which the Payment of the Gentlemen's Rents, the Tradesman's fair Demands, and the numberless increasing Taxes and Duties to Government, are principally depending: whilst I am reflecting on these things, and see little Chance of any Alteration for the Better; I say, whilst I am considering on these, and the many other inevitable Evils which this War is pregnant with; (which are not the Creatures of Imagination, but the true and real State of Facts, confirm'd by every Day's Experience,) I own, I cannot avoid reflecting, that the Subjects here treated on, though of Importance to a few worthy Individuals, are but of small Consideration, when compared with the great Objects, which ought now to engage the Attention of every Wellwisher to his Country.

By a late Account, the Increase of our
F Debt

Debt since the last Year, is estimated
at — — — — — £5,200,000

The Decrease of the Sinking }
Fund, from April 5, 1778, } 700,000
to April 5, 1779, at — — }

The Deficiencies in Duties, }
Land and Malt Tax, at — } 600,000

£6,500,000

in all Six Millions, Five Hundred Thousand Pounds: an immense Sum! But to what these Articles will amount another Year; what Sums must be borrowed; how much Reason there will *then* be to expect a greater Deficiency, both in the Taxes and Sinking Fund, are Points so self-evident, that it would be paying but an ill Compliment to the Understanding of the Reader, to enlarge upon them.

WHAT Remedies are to be applied, to such dreadful and overwhelming Evils, I will not pretend to say: but from the above Reflections, one sad Conclusion forces itself on the Mind, and that is, that *we seem to be as unequal to the War we are*
engag-

engaged in, as our Ministers certainly are to the Conduct of it.

WHAT Part Russia, Prussia, or the Dutch may take in this Dispute is as yet undetermined; but it is certainly not the Interest of the other Powers of Europe, to suffer this Nation to sink under its present Calamities. In the mean Time, they call for all the Public Spirit, Abilities, and Integrity left amongst us.

THAT Men possessed of such Qualities, and such only, of whatever Party or Denomination they are, may be sought out, and employed by his Majesty in the present awfull Situation of public Affairs, is the earnest and sincere Wish and Prayer, of a Friend to the Protestant Succession, to Liberty and to his Country.

Dec. 11, 1779.

N. B. *The greatest Part of this Pamphlet was wrote in September, though the Publication was delayed by Accident.*

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

Page 1, Line 2, for *Conduct* read *History*

Y
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the

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Dec. 11. 1720.

M. B. The greatest Part of this Paper
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J. H. I. S.

FINIS.

Page 1, Line 2, for Obedience read Obedience